



## CHARTERS: THE KEY TO OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

4-H Charters, either in certificate or letter form, provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and signed by the Secretary of Agriculture's designated representative are the only documents that officially recognize a 4-H Club or Affiliated 4-H Organization and authorizes its use of the 4-H Name and Emblem for the conduct of 4-H Youth Development programs. The USDA 4-H Charter may be obtained from the National 4-H Headquarters—USDA in any of three formats: Electronic version (most widely used), Ceremonial Charter (for special occasions or recognitions), and a Letter version.

As formulated under Title 18 U.S.C. 707, Federal regulations state "The Cooperative Extension Service, land-grant institutions, local 4-H Clubs and groups and other officially affiliated 4-H organizations **recognized by the Secretary of Agriculture**...are authorized to use the 4-H Name and Emblem." USDA 4-H Charters are the documentation of that recognition. State and local charters that do not include a USDA signatory, can not be considered official charters.

A Charter is required for any 4-H entity for it to: (1) use the 4-H Name and Emblem; and (2) be included under the Tax-Exemption Group Ruling for 4-H. State 4-H offices should maintain documentation on the issuance of Charters to 4-H entities within their respective States. Charters should be issued when establishing a 4-H entity. For those 4-H Clubs and Affiliated 4-H Organizations that have been long established and verification of a valid Charter is not available, issuance of a new Charter is recommended.

### Examples of Frequently Asked Questions:

- Q. How can I obtain copies of the USDA 4-H Charter?
- A. State 4-H Offices may obtain as many copies as needed of the USDA 4-H Charter, in the official formats through the National 4-H Headquarters—USDA. Contact the Headquarters at (202) 720-2908.
- Q. Is there an expiration date on the Charters?
- A. No. The USDA 4-H Charter, once issued, would be valid for as long as the 4-H entity receiving the Charter existed. If the 4-H entity disbanded, separated into multiple entities, or changed its name, a new charter would need to be issued. States may elect to use an expiration date on the USDA 4-H Charter prior to issuance, however, USDA does not mandate the use of an expiration date. Additionally, even with a change in the USDA designated representative, the USDA 4-H Charters remain valid until new ones are made available from the National 4-H Headquarters—USDA.
- Q. How does not having a valid USDA 4-H Charter affect the tax-exempt status?
- A. For individual 4-H Clubs or Affiliated 4-H Organizations to be recognized by the IRS as exempt from federal income tax, qualified entities must first obtain a charter from their 4-H Youth Development Program, then obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS, then submit a request for inclusion under the National 4-H Group Exemption Number (GEN) 2704 to their State 4-H Program Leader. State 4-H offices forward requests to National 4-H Headquarters, which in turn, as the parent organization for National 4-H, forwards the request to the IRS on an annual basis. Only after the IRS has updated their records is the organization tax exempt under GEN 2704.



National 4-H Headquarters; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; MS 2225; Washington, D.C. 20250  
[www.national4-hheadquarters.gov](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov)



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